

**Informal, Interactive Dialogue of the 68th Session of the General Assembly on the
Responsibility to Protect: Fulfilling Our Collective Responsibility**

New York, 8 September 2014

PRESIDENT'S SUMMARY

Background

1. The President of the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly convened an informal, interactive dialogue on the 2014 Report of the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect: “Fulfilling Our Collective Responsibility: International Assistance and the Responsibility to Protect” on 8 September 2014. The dialogue commenced with opening remarks by the Vice President of the General Assembly, H.E. Ms. Isabelle F. Picco, and the Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon.
2. H.E. Ms. Isabelle F. Picco outlined the General Assembly’s role in continuing consideration of the responsibility to protect and welcomed the focus of the dialogue on international assistance. H.E. Mr. Ban Ki-moon drew attention to the range of serious crises currently facing the international community, stressed the importance of upholding human rights, called for renewed commitment to prevention, and urged Member States to craft an ambitious agenda for the next decade of the responsibility to protect.
3. Mr. Adama Dieng, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on the Prevention of Genocide, moderated a panel discussion which included remarks by H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson, Deputy Secretary-General; H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan, former Secretary-General of the Association for Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); H.E. Dr. Jean Ping, former Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union; and, Ms. Jennifer Welsh, Special Adviser to the Secretary-General on the Responsibility to Protect.
4. H.E. Mr. Jan Eliasson outlined the main findings and recommendations of the 2014 Secretary-General’s report, focusing particularly on three types of assistance under Pillar II of the responsibility to protect. First, international actors should encourage States to fulfil their national responsibility to protect by disseminating relevant norms, undertaking preventative diplomacy, and engaging in peer-to-peer review. Second, H.E. Mr. Eliasson urged Member States to provide capacity building support for seven “specific inhibitors” that counteract dynamics that potentially lead to atrocity crimes. Third, the international community should support States who request temporary assistance by helping to deny potential perpetrators the means of committing atrocity crimes, providing access to targeted civilian expertise, and deploying peacekeeping and stabilization assistance. H.E. Mr. Eliasson urged states to focus on implementation and cited experience in Kenya, Cote d’Ivoire, Guyana, Colombia, and elsewhere as evidence that effective international assistance can yield results. The Deputy Secretary-General closed his remarks by concluding that “the time has come for a stronger global partnership to implement our collective responsibility to protect”.
5. H.E. Dr. Surin Pitsuwan suggested ASEAN could focus on providing regional support for the prevention of atrocity crimes, including by raising awareness of the responsibility to protect and building on existing regional mechanisms to expand support for prevention. H.E. Dr. Jean

Ping underlined the importance of preventive diplomacy in encouraging states to fulfil their responsibility to protect, particularly highlighting the African Union's role in monitoring political transitions and supporting electoral processes. Dr. Ping also stressed the need for close coordination between international and regional organizations, citing the establishment of the United Nations Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) as a positive example of cooperation. Ms. Welsh emphasized that the international community has a collective responsibility to prevent and respond to atrocity crimes. Ms. Welsh then stressed three contributions of the 2014 Secretary-General's report, namely that it elaborates on how to provide assistance as well as what assistance to provide, outlines in detail what forms of support are most likely to be effective and suggests how various actors can work in partnership, and acknowledges that challenges involved in developing a Pillar II agenda while also providing concrete recommendations on how to move forward.

Summary

6. 69 Member States and four civil society organizations intervened in the dialogue. Member States reaffirmed their commitment to protecting populations by preventing genocide, war crimes, ethnic cleansing and crimes against humanity, in line with paragraphs 138 and 139 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document (A/RES/60/1). Delegations reiterated that the primary responsibility to protect lies with each State. Member States also expressed the view that international support provided on the basis of consent can reinforce State sovereignty and help to build national resilience to atrocity crimes.

7. Reflecting on lessons learned, Member States stressed that a failure to adequately prevent genocide, ethnic cleansing, war crimes, and crimes against humanity can lead to rapidly deteriorating situations, leaving the international community with fewer and more costly options for action. Many interventions strongly emphasized the need for greater investment in prevention, including by building on progress currently being made within the United Nations. Member States underlined that prevention is at the heart of the responsibility to protect.

8. Delegations focused on the importance of effective partnerships for preventing and responding to atrocity crimes, noting the "Spirit of Pillar II" articulated in the Secretary-General's report. In addition to stressing the need for strong cooperation between Member States, international organizations, and civil society, interventions identified regional and sub-regional organizations as key actors. Interventions also highlighted the need to ensure national ownership, build mutual commitment, do no harm, prioritize prevention, and retain flexibility when extending international support to States.

9. The dialogue featured a strong focus on implementation of the responsibility to protect, with many speakers noting the urgent need to respond to the wide range of crises facing the international community. Member States argued that more can be done by using existing mechanisms in different and smarter ways, particularly with respect to development and the promotion of human rights. In this respect, several interventions stressed the need to focus on the risks associated with poverty and unequal access to basic services. Better use of existing human rights institutions can also help identify early warning signs and encourage States to fulfil their responsibility to protect. Member States particularly referred to the roles played by the Human

Rights Council and regional human rights institutions. A range of interventions also expressed support for the United Nations Rights Up Front initiative.

10. Considerable attention was devoted to the need to help national authorities build the capacities necessary to inhibit the risks of atrocity crimes. Member States called for enhanced assistance for national institutions engaged in delivering legitimate governance, providing effective and accountable security services, and overseeing political transitions. Support for the rule of law, independent judicial institutions, and mechanisms to ensure accountability for perpetrators of atrocity crimes - at both the national and international levels - also featured prominently. In addition, interventions noted the need to build local capacity to mediate disputes as well as capacity within the media to counteract prejudice and hate speech.

11. The contribution made by peacekeeping missions with protection of civilians mandates was widely noted, with Member States reiterating the need to extend concrete protection to the communities and individuals most directly at risk. In this context, Member States stressed the importance of providing effective training for peacekeepers and ensuring the adequate deployment of human rights experts. Several statements urged the international community to make greater efforts to deny perpetrators the means of committing atrocity crimes, including by building on the progress made with respect to the Arms Trade Treaty.

12. Member States emphasized that gender discrimination and inequality increase underlying risks associated with sexual and gender-based violence, which can constitute genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity in some circumstances. They called for enhanced prevention efforts tailored to the most vulnerable populations, including women and children.

13. In looking to the future, Member States reaffirmed the central role of the General Assembly in advancing the conceptual development and implementation of the responsibility to protect. A number of participants welcomed consideration of including the responsibility to protect on the formal agenda of the General Assembly. The dialogue demonstrated general support for conducting a stocktaking exercise in advance of the forthcoming ten year anniversary of the 2005 World Summit.